



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to H.E. Mr. Miomir Zuzul, Personal Representative of the Chairman-in-Office, regarding the missile incident in Georgia on 6th August 2007

As delivered by Ambassador Julie Finley
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
September 6, 2007

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The United States welcomes Dr. Miomir Zuzul to the Permanent Council. We appreciate his report on his recent meetings regarding the missile incident of August 6th in Georgia. The accusation of an armed attack by one participating State against another is extremely serious.

We applaud the Spanish OSCE Chairman in Office's timely action of dispatching Dr. Zuzul to Georgia and Russia, and also applaud that other countries accepted the Georgian invitation to send experts to review available information. We look forward to hearing further recommendations based on the outcome of such meetings.

We are impressed favorably by the restraint and good judgment the Georgians have shown thus far in responding to this incident and urge the parties involved and concerned to pursue diplomatic and political solutions only and to eschew any military action.

The United States reiterates its strong support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognized borders.

Two investigations by 13 technical experts from seven different countries have concluded that the evidence supports the Georgian account of the event. The August 7th report by the Russian-led Joint Peacekeeping Force in South Ossetia also supports the experts' conclusions. We have seen no real evidence to support the theory that the Georgians staged the August 6 incident. Why not invite these experts to the Permanent Council for their report.

Reliable data from multiple Georgian radars, eyewitness accounts, and the type of ordnance involved, a Kh-58 anti-radar missile, all support the contention that at least one aircraft violated Georgian airspace from the direction of Russia and fired a missile on August 6th. Moreover, the facts confirmed by independent investigators do not support Russian allegations that the attack was a Georgian provocation.

Mr. Chairman, our main purpose today should be to devise a way forward.

We must address the on-going problem of airspace violations and aerial attacks on Georgia in a robust, credible way. Otherwise, the next time, we might face the prospect of civilian deaths or the shoot-down of an aircraft, and we will have to contend with a much more serious crisis.

Therefore we would like to make two proposals.

First, we invite all OSCE participating States that still have questions about the facts in this case to engage Georgia, and, if appropriate, send their own technical experts to the region to examine the evidence as part of an OSCE-organized, third-party investigation.

Second, we recommend that the OSCE consider options for monitoring in Georgia that would permit credible third-party verification in the event of future claims of violations of Georgian airspace or of attacks on Georgian territory. This incident illustrates clearly the need for additional OSCE military monitors on the ground in South Ossetia.

Again, we thank the Chairman in Office for his timely and speedy efforts, and we certainly thank Dr. Zuzul for his report and the application of his considerable energies and intellect.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.